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## **Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference<sup>1</sup>**

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It has become a truism that a politics of difference is equivalent to “identity politics,” which is about claims of justice concerning cultural difference. In this essay I take issue with this set of equivalences. There are at least two versions of a politics of difference, which I call a politics of positional difference and a politics of cultural difference. They share a critical attitude toward a difference-blind approach to politics and policy. They differ, however, in how they understand the constitution of social groups, and in the issues of justice that they emphasize. While both versions of a politics of difference appear in contemporary political debates, I perceive that over the last two decades both the attention of public discourse and that of political theorists has shifted from the politics of positional difference to a politics of cultural difference. I argue that this shift is unfortunate because it tends to obscure important issues of justice and because it tends to limit the framing of difference politics to a liberal paradigm. We should affirm both approaches, I argue, but also be clear on the conceptual and practical differences between them.

As a social movement tendency in the 1980’s, the politics of difference involved the claims of feminist, anti-racist, and gay liberation activists that the structural inequalities of gender, race, and sexuality did not fit well with the dominant paradigm of equality and inclusion. In this dominant paradigm, the promotion of justice and equality requires non-discrimination: the application of the same principles of evaluation and distribution to all persons regardless of their particular social positions or backgrounds. In this ideal, which many understood as the liberal paradigm, social justice means ignoring gender, racial or sexual differences among people. Social movements asserting a politics of difference, and

the theorists following them argued that this difference-blind ideal was part of the problem. Identifying equality with equal treatment ignores deep material differences in social position, division of labor, socialized capacities, normalized standards and ways of living that continue to disadvantage members of historically excluded groups. Commitment to substantial equality thus requires attending to rather than ignoring such differences.

In the context of ethnic politics and resurgent nationalism, a second version of a politics of difference gained currency in the 1990's, which focused on differences of nationality, ethnicity and religion. It emphasizes the value of cultural distinctness to individuals, as against a liberal individualism for which culture is accidental to the self or something adopted voluntarily. Most modern societies contain multiple cultural groups some of which unjustly dominate the state or other important social institutions, thus inhibiting the ability of minority cultures to live fully meaningful lives in their own terms. Contrary to arguments for cultural neutrality which until recently have been the orthodox liberal stance, the politics of cultural difference argues that public accommodation to and support of cultural difference is compatible with and even required by just institutions.

I understand my own writing on the politics of difference as emphasizing the politics of positional difference in structural position. Both *Justice and the Politics of Difference* and *Inclusion and Democracy* critically assess the tendency of both public and private institutions in contemporary liberal democratic societies to reproduce sexual, racial, and class inequality by applying standards and rules in the same way to all who plausibly come under their purview. They consider how broad structures of the division of labor, hierarchical decision making power, and processes of normalization inhibit the ability of some people to develop and exercise their capacities while offering wide opportunity to others. Each book, however, also contains elements that relate more to the politics of cultural difference. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* refers to cultural claims of indigenous people and speaks approvingly of movements of structurally oppressed

groups to resist stigma by constructing positive group affinities, which I understand more as a means to the achievement of structural equality, rather than an end in itself.<sup>2</sup>

*Justice and the Politics of Difference* was published earlier than most of the work in recent political theory which focuses on a politics of cultural difference. That body of work might be said to begin with Charles Taylor's essay, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition," and to receive its first book length treatment in Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship*.<sup>3</sup> Published after I began to see that different theoretical approaches to a politics of difference were solidifying, *Inclusion and Democracy* tries more explicitly to distinguish focus on structural inequality from focus on injustice through cultural difference and conflict. While most of that book theorizes within the politics of positional difference, one chapter of *Inclusion and Democracy* articulates a relational concept of self-determination, to contrast with more rigid notions of sovereignty. I intend that chapter to contribute to discussions in the politics of cultural difference.<sup>4</sup> One motivation for the present essay is to sort out this distinction between two approaches to a politics of difference more thoroughly.<sup>5</sup>

In the two sections that follow, I first lay out and distinguish these two versions of a politics of difference. Both the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference challenge commitments to political equality that tend to identify equality with sameness and which believe that the best way to pursue social and political equality is to ignore group differences in public policy and in how individuals are treated. They both argue that where group difference is socially significant for issues of conflict, domination, or advantage, equal respect may not imply treating everyone in the same way. Public and civic institutions may be either morally required or permitted to notice social group difference, and to treat members of different groups differently for the sake of promoting equality or freedom.

Despite these similarities, it is important to be clear on the differences between a politics of positional difference and a politics

of cultural difference, for several reasons. In recent discussions of a politics of difference, I think that analysts sometimes either merge the two models or attribute to one features specific to the other. Such confusions can have the consequence that readers fail to notice important differences. For example, some critics aim objections at the wrong target.

In his recent book, *Culture and Equality*, for example, Brian Barry fails to distinguish any strands in the thick ball of theoretical writing that he winds together.<sup>6</sup> As a result, he levels criticisms at some writers that may be more apt for others, and he sometimes merges positions in a way that confuses the debate more than clarifies it. A second motive for this paper, then, is to try to sort out some of this confusion that I find beset some recent discussions of politics and difference.

A more important reason to elaborate the distinction between the two versions of a politics of difference, from my point of view, is to recover some issues of justice and ways of thinking about justice and difference that first motivated this line of thinking a quarter century ago. As I will discuss below, a politics of positional difference concerns primarily issues of justice concerning structural inequality. Persons suffer injustice by virtue of structural inequality when their group social positioning means that the operation of diverse institutions and practices conspire to limit their opportunities to achieve well being. Persons suffer specifically culture-based injustice when they are not free to express themselves as they wish, associate with others with whom they share forms of expression and practices, or to socialize their children in the cultural ways they value, or when their group situation is such that they bear significant economic or political cost in trying to pursue a distinctive way of life. As I will discuss later, structural inequalities sometime build on perceived cultural differences. To the extent that political thinking takes a politics of cultural difference as paradigmatic, however, thinking about justice and group difference tends to focus on issues of liberty and tends to obscure issues of inequality in opportunities structured by the division of

labor, hierarchies of decision making, and the norms and standards that institutions apply to reward achievement.

Thus the third section of this essay discusses how the tendency which I detect in much recent political theory to narrow consideration of a politics of difference to a liberal paradigm has at least three unfortunate consequences. First, where structural injustices do build on perceived cultural differences, a politics of cultural differences and its emphasis on liberty does not make visible enough issues of structural inequalities. Second, because the politics and political theory of cultural differences tends to focus on what state policy properly should allow, forbid or remain silent about, it tends to ignore civil society as a crucial site for working on injustice. Recent discussions of the politics of cultural difference, finally, especially regarding the status of women within cultural minorities, too often themselves tend to elevate particular group based standards as normative for a whole polity without specifically noticing this normalizing move.

## **I. Politics of Positional Difference**

This approach defines social groups as constituted through structural social processes which differently position people along social axes that generate status, power, and opportunity for the development of capacities or the acquisition of goods. Important axes of structural social privilege and disadvantage concern the social division of labor, hierarchies of decision making power, practices of sexuality and body aesthetic, and the arrangement of persons in physical and social space.

Persons in less advantaged position suffer injustice in the form of structural inequality, or what Charles Tilly calls “durable inequality.”<sup>7</sup> Some institutional rules and practices, the operation of hegemonic norms, the shape of economic or political incentives, the physical effects of past actions and policies, and people acting on stereotypical assumptions, all conspire to produce systematic and reinforcing inequalities between groups. People differently

positioned in structural processes often have unequal opportunities for self-development, access to resources, to make decisions both about the conditions of their own action and that of others, or to be treated with respect or deference.

These structural inequalities do not determine that every member of a less privileged group suffers deprivation or domination. They do make most members of structurally disadvantaged groups more vulnerable to and harmed than others. They also put great obstacles to and constraints on the ability of group members to achieve well-being. It is these vulnerabilities and limitations that define structural injustice more than the amount of goods or power individuals may have at a particular time.<sup>8</sup>

The politics of positional difference argues that public and private institutional policies and practices that interpret equality as requiring being blind to group differences are not likely to undermine persistent structural group differences and often reinforce them. Even in the absence of explicitly discriminatory laws and rules, adherence to body aesthetic, struggle over power, and other dynamics of differentiation, will tend to reproduce given categorical inequalities unless institutions take explicit action to counteract such tendencies. Thus to remove unjust inequality it is necessary explicitly to recognize group difference and either compensate for disadvantage, revalue some attributes, positions or actions, or take special steps to meet needs and empower members of disadvantaged groups.

Socio-economic class is a paradigm of such structural grouping, where class does not refer simply to income level, but also to position in the social division of labor, decision making structures, and group segmented practices of fashion and taste. Here I will elaborate three additional forms of group difference which have motivated claims of a politics of difference: groups defined by disability, gender, and institutional racism.

### A. *Disability as Structural Inequality*

Most theoretical writings on social justice either do not notice disability at all or bring it up in order to assert that disability is an outlier category, which theories of justice may deal with after addressing disadvantages which supposedly raise issues of justice in a more obvious way. John Rawls, for example, famously “puts aside” those disabilities “so severe as to prevent people from being cooperating members of society in the usual sense”<sup>9</sup> until the theory deals with the easier and more generally shared issues of justice. It is better to begin theorizing justice, he says, by assuming that “everyone has physical needs and psychological capacities within the normal range.”<sup>10</sup>

Some philosophers recently have questioned this set of assumptions, and have begun to develop alternative analyses both of disability and justice.<sup>11</sup> Considering the large number of people who have impaired physical and mental capacities at some point in their lives, it is simply factually wrong to think of disability as a relatively uncommon condition not affecting how we should think about justice. I suggest that we can learn much about social justice generally as concerning issues of structural inequality, normalization, and stigmatization, if we decide to make disability *paradigmatic* of structural injustice, instead of considering it exceptional.

In his recent book attacking all versions of a politics of difference, Brian Barry devotes considerable space to defending a standard principle of merit in the allocation of positions. Merit involves equal opportunity in the following sense: it rejects a system that awards positions explicitly according to class, race, gender, family background, and so on. Under a merit principle, all who wish should have the opportunity to compete for positions of advantage, and those most qualified should win the competition. Positions of authority or expertise should be occupied by those persons who demonstrate excellence in particular skills and who best exhibit the demeanor expected of people in those positions.

Everyone else is a loser in respect to those positions, and they suffer no injustice on that account.<sup>12</sup>

In this merit system, according to Barry, it is natural that people with disabilities will usually turn out to be losers.

Surely it is to be expected in the nature of the case that, across the group (disabled) as a whole, its members will be less qualified than average, even if the amount of money spent on their education is the average, or more than the average.<sup>13</sup>

Barry's is a common opinion. In our scheme of social cooperation, certain skills and abilities can and should be expected of average workers, and it is "in the nature of the case" that most people with disabilities do not meet these expectations. Thus they do not merit the jobs in which we expect these skills, and do not merit the income, autonomy, status, and other forms of privilege that come with those jobs. These people's deficiencies are not their fault, of course. So a decent society will support their needs and ensure them a dignified life, in spite of their inability to contribute significantly to social production.

One of the objectives of the disability rights movements has been to challenge this bit of liberal common sense. Most people who have not thought about the issues very much tend to regard being "disabled" as an attribute of persons: some people simply lack the functionings that enable normal people to live independently, compete in job markets, have a satisfying social life, and so on. Many in the disability rights movements, however, conceptualize the problem that people with disabilities face rather differently. The problem is not with the attributes that individual persons have or do not have. The problem, rather, is the *lack of fit* between the attributes of certain persons and structures, practices, norms, and aesthetic standards dominant in the society. The built environment is biased to support the capacities of people who can walk, climb, see, hear, within what are thought of as the "normal range" of functionings, and presents significant obstacles for



people whose capacities are judged outside this range. Both interactive and technical ways of assessing the intelligence, skill and adaptability of people in schools and workplaces assume ways of evaluating aptitude and achievement that unfairly exclude or disadvantage many people with disabilities from developing or exercising skills. The physical layout and equipment in workplaces and the organization of work process too often make it impossible for a person with an impaired functioning to use the skills they have.<sup>14</sup> Hegemonic standards of charm, beauty, grace, wit, or attentiveness position some people with disabilities as monstrous or abject.

These and other aspects of the division of labor, hegemonic norms, and physical structures constitute structural injustice for people with disabilities. Many people with disabilities unfairly suffer limitation to their opportunities for developing capacities, earning a living through satisfying work, having a rewarding social life, and living as autonomous adults. A difference blind liberalism can offer only very limited remedy for this injustice. It is no response to the person who moves in a wheel chair or who tries to enter a courtroom accessible only by stairs that the state treats all citizens in the same way. The blind engineer derives little solace from an employer who assures him that they make the same computer equipment available to all employees. The opportunities of people with disabilities can be made equal only if others specifically notice their differences, cease regarding them as unwanted deviance from accepted norms and unacceptable costs to efficient operations, and take affirmative measures to accommodate the specific capacities of individuals so that they can function, as all of us should be able to, at their best and with dignity.

The Americans with Disabilities Act recognizes this in principle, inasmuch as it requires that employers, landlords, and public services make “reasonable accommodation” to the specific needs of people with disabilities. It codifies a politics of positional difference. The law has generated significant controversy, of course, concerning who counts as having a disability and about what kinds of accommodation are reasonable. As a group, people with

disabilities continue to be unfairly excluded from or disadvantaged in education and occupational opportunities, and continue to have unfair difficulties in access to transportation, or in having simple pleasures like a restaurant meal or an evening at the theater. Only continued organized pressure on many institutions to conform with principles of fair accommodation will improve this structural situation.

I have begun with the example of injustice towards people with disabilities because, as I said earlier, I wish to suggest that it is paradigmatic of the general approach I am calling a politics of positional difference. It represents a clear case where difference-blind treatment or policy is more likely to perpetuate than correct injustice. The systematic disadvantage at which facially neutral standards puts many people in this case, however, just as clearly does not derive from internal cultural attributes that constitute a group, "people with disabilities." It may be plausible to speak of a Deaf culture, to the extent that many Deaf people use a unique language and sometimes live together in Deaf communities. In a wider sense, however, there is no community or culture of people with disabilities. Instead, this category designates a structural group constituted from the outside by the deviation of its purported members from normalized institutional assumptions about the exhibition of skill, definition of tasks in a division of labor, ideals of beauty, built environment standards, compartments of sociability, and so on. The remedy for injustice to people with disabilities consists in challenging the norms and rules of the institutions that most condition the life options and the attainment of well-being of these persons structurally positioned as deviant.

Issues of justice raised by many group-based conflicts and social differences, I suggest, follow this paradigm. They concern the way structural social processes position individuals with similar physical attributes, socialized capacities, body habits and life style, sexual orientations, family and neighborhood resources, and so on, are positioned in the social division of labor, relations of decision making power, or hegemonic norms of achievement, beauty, respectability, and the like. The politics of positional dif-

ference focuses on these issues of inclusion and exclusion, and how they make available or limit the substantive opportunities for persons to develop capacities and achieve well-being. I will now all too briefly discuss racism and gender inequality as further examples of such structural inequality.

### *B. Racial Inequality*

Clearly this essay's purpose is not to give an account of the structural inequalities of institutional racism. In this context, I want to make only a few points about racial inequality and the politics of difference. Although I will focus on racialized processes of structural inequality in the United States, I think that racial inequality structures many societies in the world. As I understand it, racism consists in structural processes that normalize body aesthetic, determine that physical, dirty or servile work is most appropriate for members of certain groups, produces and reproduces segregation of members of these racialized groups, and renders deviant the comportments and habits of these segregated persons in relation to dominant norms of respectability.

What distinguishes "race" from ethnicity or nation, conceptually? The former naturalizes or "epidermalizes" the attributes of difference.<sup>15</sup> Racism attaches significance to bodily characteristics – skin color, hair type, facial features, and constructs hierarchies of standard or ideal body types against which others appear inferior, stigmatized, deviant, or abject. In Western structures of anti-Black racism this hierarchy appears both as dichotomous and scalar. That is, racial categorization is organized around a Black/White dichotomy, and this dichotomy organizes a grading of types according to how "close" they are to Black (most inferior) or White (the superior).<sup>16</sup>

Processes of racialization stigmatize or devalue bodies, body types, or items closely attached to bodies, such as clothing; this stigmatization and stereotyping appear in public images and in the way some people react to some others. Racialization also

involves understandings of the proper work of some and its hierarchical status in relation to others. The stigma of blackness in America, for example, has its origins in the division of labor, namely slavery.<sup>17</sup> The slave does hard labor under domination, from which owners accumulate profits; or the slave does servile labor to attend the needs and elevate the status of the ruling group. While chattel slavery was abolished a century and a half ago, racialized positions in the social division of labor remain. The least desirable work, the work with the lowest pay, least autonomy, and lowest status, is the hard physical work, the dirty work, and the servant work. In the United States these are racialized forms of work, that is, work thought to belong to black and brown people primarily, and these increasingly are also foreigners. A similar process of racialization has occurred in Europe, which position persons of Turkish, North African, South Asian, sub-Saharan African, and Middle Eastern origin as Other, and tends to restrict them to lower status positions in the social division of labor.

Segregation is a third common structure of racial inequality. It is not uncommon for migrants to choose to live near one another in neighborhood enclaves. I refer to this process as “clustering,” and the urban residential patterning it produces might be considered a manifestation of cultural differentiation. While residential segregation often overlaps with or builds on such clustering processes, segregation is a different and more malignant process. Even when not enforced by law, segregation is a process of exclusion from residential neighborhood opportunity that leaves the relatively worse residential options for members of denigrated groups. The actions of local and national government, private developers and landlords, housing consumers, and others conspire – not necessarily by intention – to concentrate members of these denigrated groups. Dominant groups thereby derive privileges such as larger and more pleasant space, greater amenities, stable and often increasing property values, and so on.<sup>18</sup>

With segregation, the stigma of racialized bodies and denigrated labor marks space itself and the people who grow up and live in neighborhoods. People who live together in segregated neigh-

borhood tend to develop group specific idioms, styles of comportment, interests, and artistic forms. These also are liable to be devalued and stigmatized by dominant norms. People who wish to appear respectable and professional, for example, had better shed the habits of walking, laughing, and talking in slang they have learned on the home block. If these are properly considered “cultural,” they are better considered consequences of segregation and limitation of opportunity, rather than their causes. These structural relations of bodily affect, meanings and interests in the social division of labor, segregation, and normalization of dominant habitus operate to limit the opportunities of many to learn and use satisfying skills in socially recognized settings, to accumulate income or wealth, or to attain positions of power and prestige.

The main purpose of this brief account of racism here is to exhibit it as a set of structural relations in which processes of normalization have a large role. Being white is to occupy a social position, or set of social positions, that privileges some people according to at least the parameters I have outlined, and sets standards of respectability or achievement for the entire society. Being Black, or “of color,” means being perceived as not fitting the standards, being suited for particular kinds of work, or that one does not belong in certain places. An anti-racist politics of difference argues that such liabilities to disadvantage cannot be overcome by race-blind principles of formal equality in employment, political party competition, and so on. Where racialized structural inequality influences so many institutions and potentially stigmatizes and impoverishes so many people, a society that aims to redress such injustice must *notice* the processes of racial differentiation before it can correct them.

Even when overt discriminatory practices are illegal and widely condemned, racialized structures are produced and reproduced in many everyday interactions in civil society and workplaces. It is important that persons positioned similarly by racial structures be able to organize politically together to bring attention to these relations of privilege of disadvantage. While such organizing

properly has some elements of the celebration of positive shared experience, or “identity politics,” the primary purpose of such group based organizing is, or ought to be, to confront and undermine the structural processes that perpetuate the limitation of opportunities.<sup>19</sup> Anti-racist movements are and ought to be directed at government policy to intervene in the structures. Government is not the only agent for institutional change, however, and I will return to this point.

### *C. Gender Inequality*

In the literature of political theory, the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference conceive women’s issues differently. As I will discuss below, some proponents of a politics of cultural difference implicitly invoke gender justice under norms of equal treatment. As discussed by much of the literature, the political struggle consists in getting women recognized as the *same* as men in respect to having rights to autonomy. In the politics of positional difference, by contrast, feminist politics are a species of the politics of difference; that is, on this approach, in order to promote gender equality it is necessary to notice existing structural processes that differently position men and women. On this account, gender injustice also involves processes of structuring the social division of labor and the fit or lack of fit of bodies and modes of life with hegemonic norms.

In the last quarter century there have been many changes in gendered norms of behavior and comportment expected of men and women, with a great deal more freedom of choice in taste and self-presentation available to members of both sexes than in the past. Basic structures of gender comportment, assumptions that the normal body is implicitly male, the structures of heterosexual expectations, and the sexual division of labor nevertheless continue structurally to afford men more privilege and opportunity for access to resources, positions of power and authority, or the ability to pursue their own life plans.

People too often react to public evidence of female specific conditions with aversion, ridicule, or denial. Public institutions which claim to include women equally too often fail to accommodate to the needs of menstruating, pregnant, and breast feeding women, for example. This sometimes discourages them from participation in these institutions. Sometimes the costs to women of being positioned as deviant in relation to normal bodies are small inconveniences, like remembering to carry tampons in anticipation that the women's room at work will not supply them. Sometimes, however, women suffer serious discomfort, threats to their health, harassment, job loss, or forego benefits by withdrawing in order to avoid these consequences. Including women as equals in schools, workplaces, and other institutions entails accommodating to our bodily specificity to the extent that we can both be women and excel in or enjoy the activities of those institutions.

Aside from these stark examples of women's differences rendering us deviant in some settings, much contemporary feminist theory argues more broadly that the social imagination of this society projects onto women all the sense of vulnerability and chaotic desire attendant on being embodied and sexual beings. The norms of many public professional institutions, however, exclude or repress acknowledgement of bodily need and sexuality. The presence of women or womanliness in them, then, remains upsetting unless the women can present themselves like men.

The social differences produced by a gender division of labor constitute another access of gender difference that render women vulnerable to domination or exploitation or exclusion. Although large changes in attitudes have occurred about the capacities of men and women, and most formal barriers to women's pursuit of occupations and activities have been removed, in at least one respect change has been slow and minor. A structured social division of labor remains in which women do most of the unpaid care work in the family, and most people of both sexes assume that women will have primary responsibility for care of children, and other family members, and for housecleaning.

As Susan Okin theorized it more than fifteen years ago, this gender division of labor accounts in large measure for injustice to women, whether or not they themselves are wives or mothers. The socialization of girls continues to be oriented toward caring and helping. Occupational sex segregation continues to crowd women in a relatively few job categories, keeping women's wages low. Heterosexual couples sometimes find it rational to depend on a man's paycheck for their primary income, if it is large enough. Thus women and their children are vulnerable to poverty if the husband/father ceases to support them.<sup>20</sup>

The structural positioning of women in the division of labor offers another instance of gender normalization. Most employers institutionalize an assumption that occupants of a good job – one that earns enough to support a family at a decent level of well-being and with a decent pension, vacation time, and job security – can devote himself or herself primarily to that job. Workers whose family responsibilities impinge on or conflict with employer expectations are deviants, and they find it difficult to combine real work and family responsibility.

Feminism construed as a politics of difference thus argues that real equality and freedom for women entail attending to both embodied, socialized, and institutional sex and gender differences in order to ensure that women – as well as men who find themselves positioned like many women in the division of labor in comportment or taste – do not bear unfair costs of institutional assumptions about what women and men are or ought to be doing, who they feel comfortable working with or voting for, and so on. For women to have equal opportunities with men to attain to positions of high status, power, or income, it is not enough that they prove their strength, leadership capacities or intelligence are as good as men's. This is relatively easy. It is more difficult to overcome the costs and disadvantages deriving from application of supposedly difference-blind norms of productivity, respectability, or personal authority, that in fact carry structural biases against many women.



The project of this section has been to explain what I call the politics of positional difference. The problems of injustice to which it responds arise from structural processes of the division of labor, social segregation and lack of fit between hegemonic norms and interpreted bodies. I have dwelt on injustice to people with disabilities, racial injustice and gender injustice in order to bring out social group difference not reducible to cultural difference, and in order to illustrate some diverse forms that these structural inequalities take. Each form of structural inequality concerns relations of privilege and disadvantage where some people's opportunities for the development and exercise of their capacities are limited and they are vulnerable to having the conditions of their lives and action determined by others without reciprocation. A politics of positional difference holds that equalizing these opportunities cannot rely on supposedly group-blind policies, because so many rules, norms and practices of many institutions have group differentiating implications. Promoting justice requires some efforts that attend to such structural differences and attempt to change them, not only within law and public policy, but also in many other social and economic institutions and practices.

## **II. The Politics of Cultural Difference**

A politics of positional difference continues to have proponents among political theorists and those engaged in public discussion about the implications of group difference for values of freedom, equality, and justice. Indeed, I count myself as among them. What I am calling a politics of cultural difference has in recent years received more attention, both from political theorists, and in wider political debates.

I consider Will Kymlicka's book, *Multicultural Citizenship*, one of the earliest clear and thorough theoretical statements of this distinctive approach to a politics of difference. In that book Kymlicka explicitly distinguishes his approach to issues of group difference from one concerned with the situation of socially disadvantaged groups. "The marginalization of women, gays and les-

bians, and the disabled,” he says, “cuts across ethnic and national lines – it is found in majority cultures and homogeneous nation-states as well as national minorities and ethnic groups – and it must be fought in all these places.”<sup>21</sup> Kymlicka does not elaborate this distinction between his approach to multiculturalism and that concerned with marginalized groups. It seems clear, however, that one basis of the distinction is that he thinks that groups defined by what he calls “societal culture” are different kinds of groups from the sort of group whose members face threats of marginalization or social disadvantage like that faced by women, sexual minorities, or people with disabilities. According to the terms I am using in this paper the latter are *structural* social groups; what makes these group groups is that their members are similarly positioned on axes of privileged and disadvantaged through structural social processes such as the organization of the division of labor or normalization.

The groups with which Kymlicka is concerned face distinctive issues, according to him, just because what defines them as groups is “societal culture.” In his theory this term refers only to differences of nation and ethnicity. A “societal culture” is

synonymous with ‘a nation’ or ‘a people’ – that is, an inter-generational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. A state is multicultural if its members either belong to different nations (a multi-nation state), or have migrated from different nations (a polyethnic state), and if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life.<sup>22</sup>

The societal culture to which a person relates is an important aspect of his or her personal identity; his or her personal autonomy depends in part on being able to engage in specific cultural practices with others who identify with one another as in the same cultural group; one being able to speak the language one finds most comfortable in the conduct of everyday affairs; on having the space and time to celebrate group specific holidays and to dis-

play symbols important to the group. When the societal culture takes the form of nationality, this personal autonomy is tied to self-government autonomy for the group itself.

Kymlicka, along with most who theorize the politics of cultural difference, thinks that most political societies today consist of at least two cultural groups, and often more than two. The question the politics of cultural difference poses is this: Given that a political society consists of two or more societal cultures, what does justice require in the way of their mutual accommodation to one another's practices and forms of cultural expression, and to what extent can and should a liberal society give public recognition to these cultural diversities?

The politics of cultural difference assumes a situation of inequality common in contemporary polities in which members of multiple cultures dwell. It assumes that the state or polity is dominated by one of these cultural groups, which usually, but not always, constitutes a majority of the polity's members. The situation of political conflict, according to the politics of cultural difference, is one in which this dominant group can limit the ability of one or more of the cultural minorities to live out their forms of expression; or more benignly, the sheer ubiquity of the dominant culture threatens to swamp the minority culture to the extent that its survival as a culture may be endangered, even though the lives of the individual members of the group may be relatively comfortable in other ways. Under these circumstances of inequality of unfreedom, members of embattled cultural groups frequently demand special rights and protections to enable their culture to flourish, and/or claim rights to a political society of their own either within a federated relationship that of the dominant culture(s).

The politics of cultural difference explicitly rejects political principles and practices which assume that a single polity must coincide with a single common culture. This implies rejecting as well the assumption held by many liberals that for the state and law to treat all citizens with equal respect entails that all be treated in the same way. Kymlicka distinguishes two kinds of cultural groups

existing within today's multicultural politics, ethnic groups and national groups. Much of the response to his theory has focused on whether this distinction is viable, whether Kymlicka has made it correctly, and whether he has correctly identified the requirements of justice appropriate for each. Neither this distinction nor the debates it generates concern the major argument of this essay.

Kymlicka's theory has received wide attention because within it he has identified and clarified many of the major issues of conflict and potential accommodation that arise in the contemporary politics of cultural difference. Most subsequent theories take up these issues and add to them. What does freedom of cultural expression require? Does it entail forms of public recognition of and accommodation to practices, symbols, and ways of doing things, and not just allowing group members private freedom to engage in minority practices and forms of expression? Where the rules of public regulation, employers, or others come into conflict with what members of cultural minorities consider cultural obligatory or necessary for the survival of their culture, does justice require exemption from those sorts of rules? Can cultural groups make a legitimate claim on the wider polity for resources necessary to memorialize their cultural past and the means to preserve its main elements for future generations? Do some cultural groups have legitimate claims to national autonomy, and if so, what does this imply for forms of self-government and relations with other groups? Does justice require that state and society take special measures to try to prevent members of cultural minorities from suffering a loss of opportunity or other disadvantage because they are committed to maintaining their cultural identity? Since cultural minorities often suffer political disadvantage in getting members elected to office and in voicing their interests and perspectives in representative bodies, does justice call for installing forms of group representation? Kymlicka considers the question of whether liberal politics ought to go so far as to tolerate practices that members of a culture regard as important but which a wider societal judgment finds violate standards of liberal ac-

commodation and individual human rights. He argues that such practices should not be tolerated.

I have dwelt on Kymlicka's text because he more explicitly than others distinguishes the politics of cultural difference from what I call a politics of positional difference. With one important exception, moreover, the issues and arguments he advances in *Multicultural Citizenship* have set an agenda of theorizing that subsequent texts have debated and debated. To the issues Kymlicka treats, theorists of a politics of cultural difference have added another: the extent to which religious difference should be accommodated and affirmed in a multicultural liberal polity.<sup>23</sup> No doubt partly because issues of religious difference and perceived freedom of religious practice have become more prominent in political debates within European and North American societies, as well as many other places, some theorists of politics and group difference have put religion alongside ethnicity and nationality as paramount forms of deep diversity.<sup>24</sup> The logic of religious difference and its implications for politics importantly diverges from ethnicity and nationality, at least because religious adherents often take doctrine and ceremony not simply helping to define their identities, but also as obligatory for them. This raises the stakes in potential conflicts between majority commitments and the commitments of religious minorities.

Much recent theorizing about the politics of cultural difference takes issue with what writers charge is Kymlicka's overly homogeneous and overly bounded concept of societal culture. Joseph Carens, for example, argues that Kymlicka's concept of societal culture implicitly follows the logic of the concept of nation-state, even as the theory aims to challenge the singularity of one state for each nation.<sup>25</sup> Ethnic and national groups, on his model, are each bounded by a singular understanding of themselves, in which place, language, history, and practice line up, and are differentiated from other groups. The motive for Kymlicka's theory is precisely to challenge the singularity of the self-conception of the nation-state; but his logic of group difference may follow a similar logic. Many others theorizing a politics of cultural difference

raise problems with what they fear is an “essentialism” of cultural difference, where either participants or observers take a culture to be a coherent whole, relatively unchanging, and fully separate from other cultures. Against this, theorists such as Bhikhu Parekh and Seyla Benhabib offer a politics of cultural difference which puts dialogue among cultures at the center.<sup>26</sup> On the dialogic view, members of different cultural groups within a society often influence one another and engage in productive cultural exchange, and this interaction ought to be mobilized to resolve intercultural conflict.

Since both the theoretical approaches I have reviewed in this essay are versions of a politics of difference, it should not be surprising that they share some features. I find two major similarities in the analyses and arguments of the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference. Both worry about the domination some groups are able to exercise over public meaning in ways that limit the freedom or curtail opportunity. Second, both challenge difference-blind public principle. They question the position that equal citizenship in a common polity entails a commitment to a common public interest, a single national culture, a single set of rules that applies to everyone in the same way. They both argue that commitment to justice sometimes requires noticing social or cultural differences and sometimes treating individuals and groups differently.

While they are logically distinct, each approach is important. The politics of cultural difference is important because it offers vision and principle to respond to dominative nationalist or other forms of absolutist impulses. We can live together in common political institutions and still maintain institutions by which we distinguish ourselves as peoples of cultures with distinct practices and traditions. Acting on such a vision can and should reduce ethnic, nationalist, and religious violence. The politics of positional difference is important because it highlights the depth and systematic basis of inequality, and shows that inequality before the law is not sufficient to remedy this inequality. It calls attention to

relations and processes of exploitation, marginalization, normalization that keep many people in subordinate positions.

I am not here arguing that political actors and theorists ought to accept one of these approaches and reject the other. Instead, my claim is that it is important to notice the difference between them, a difference sometimes missed in recent literatures. At the same time, I find that the two forms of argument are compatible in practice. Indeed, for some kinds of issues of group based politics and conflict, both forms of analysis are necessary. As I have indicated above, and will discuss again in the next section, for example, the oppression of minority cultures often merges into structural inequalities of racism insofar as it entails the limitation of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities.

Before turning to my worries that both theory and political discussion pay too much attention to a politics of cultural difference at the expense of a politics of positional difference, let me conclude this section by addressing a question some readers may have. To what extent is this distinction in theoretical approaches the same as or similar to the distinction that Nancy Fraser has drawn between a politics of redistribution and politics of recognition? They are not in fact the same distinctions at all. As I understand Fraser's categorization, both forms of a politics of difference I have articulated here fall under her category of a politics of recognition. Indeed, in her most recent statement of her theory, Fraser distinguishes what she calls a participatory parity approach – which roughly corresponds to what I call the politics of positional difference – and an identity politics approach – which roughly corresponds to what I am calling the politics of cultural difference.<sup>27</sup> Insofar as there can be any comparison, that is, I think Fraser would categorize both approaches to the politics of difference I have described different forms of a politics of recognition. Except for Charles Taylor, Fraser gives little attention to theorists I associate with the politics of cultural difference, and she favors the approach she calls participatory parity as a response to structural inequalities of gender, race, and sexuality.

I find this distinction between different forms of recognition politics useful. I continue to think, however, that it is too polarizing to construct economic relations, or redistribution, and culture, or recognition, as mutually exclusive categories.<sup>28</sup> As I have tried to do in the first section of these essay, it seems more useful to me to break out different aspects of the production of structural inequality such as normalization and the division of labor, each of which has both material effects on access to resources as well as the social meanings underlying status hierarchy.

### **III. Critical Limits to the Politics of Cultural Difference**

The politics of cultural difference exhibits a different logic from the politics of positional difference. I have argued that each highlights important issues of justice relevant to contemporary politics and the two approaches are often compatible in a particular political context. To the extent that recent political theory and public discourse focus on the politics of cultural difference, however, they inappropriately narrow debates about justice and difference. Some issues of justice retreat from view, and the discussion brings those that remain squarely under a liberal paradigm, which sometimes distorts their significance.

In this final section I will discuss three such worries with the ascendancy of issues of ethnic, national, and religious difference in debates about justice and social group difference. The paradigm of the politics of cultural difference tends to underplay important issues of group difference such as those I have discussed in giving an account of the politics of positional difference. Here I will take one example: the paradigm of cultural difference obscures racism as a specific form of structural injustice. Second, I will discuss how the liberal framework under which the politics of cultural differences brings its issues focuses too much on the state in relation to individuals and groups, and does not see relations in civil society either as enacting injustice or as a source of remedy. Because many theorists of the politics of cultural difference define their issues in terms of toleration, finally, I will argue that



the politics of cultural difference easily slips into expressing and reinforcing a normalization exposed and criticized by a politics of positional difference.

*A. Tendency to Obscure Some Issues of Justice*

As I discussed earlier, the politics of positional difference conceptualizes group difference primarily in structural terms. Social relations and processes put people in differing categorical social positions in relation to one another in ways that privilege those in one category in relation to another or others, both in the range of opportunities for self-development available to them, the resources they have or can access, the power they have over others or over the conditions of the lives of others, and the degree of status they have as indexed by others' willingness to treat them with deference or special respect. Class and gender are important structural axes in most societies. I have argued that physical and mental ability are functionally similar in our society that normalizes certain capacities. Race also names an important structural axis in most societies today.

The politics of cultural difference does not have a conceptual place for racial difference. To be sure, racialized social processes usually build on perceived differences in culture – language, religion, a sense of common lineage, specific cosmological beliefs, differing social practices, and so on. As I have discussed above, however, racialization and racism consist in a great deal more than that groups perceive themselves as distinct in relation to one another and refuse to recognize the equal legitimacy of the culture of others. It even consists in more than that groups that perceive themselves as ethnically or culturally different have conflicts or are hostile to one another. Such ethnic or cultural difference becomes racial hierarchy when the groups interact in a social system where one group is able to extract benefits by its hierarchical relation to the other. In the process of racialization, norms construct members of a subordinate group as stereotyped and despised bodies, assign them to menial, dirty or servile work,

exclude them from high status positions, and tend to segregate the subordinate group from the dominant group.

The politics of cultural difference obscures this process. Many political claims and conflicts in contemporary multicultural societies involve both issues of cultural freedom *and* issues of structural inequality such as racism. Where there are problems of a lack of recognition of or accommodation to national, cultural, religious or linguistic groups in liberal democratic societies today (as well as others), these are often played out through dominant discourses that stereotype members of minority groups, find them technically inept or morally inferior, spatially segregate them and limit their opportunities to develop skills and compete for high status positions.<sup>29</sup>

Issues of justice for Latinos in the United States, for example, concern not only cultural accommodation and acceptance, but also exposure and criticism of institutional racism. Many believe that the two are deeply intertwined. Demands for and implementation of policies that mandate English only in public institutions such as courts and schools both limit the freedom of some Latinos to express themselves freely, stigmatize them, and often limit their ability to develop marketable skills. The position of many Latinos is racialized, moreover, in that their brown skin and facial features place them together as a group in the eyes of many Anglos, in spite of the fact that they or their parents hail from different parts of Latin American and experience differences of language and tradition among themselves. Within the dominant structures, “Hispanics” occupy particular positions in the social division of labor, and the benefits employers derive from this positioning are significant enough to limit the opportunities of members of this racialized group to move into other occupational positions.<sup>30</sup>

Everywhere that indigenous people make claims to freedom of cultural expression and political self-determination, to take another example, they do so in the context of racialized structural inequality. Indians in North America, Aborigines in Australia, indigenous people in Latin America, are all victims of historical-

ly racist policies of murder, removal, spatial concentration, theft of their land and resources, and limitation of their opportunities to make a living. Structures of racialized inequality runs deep in these societies, and discrimination and stereotyping persist.

Many conflicts over cultural toleration or accommodation in contemporary liberal democracies, in my observation, occur within a context of structural inequality between the dominant groups and cultural minorities. What is at stake in many of these conflicts is not simply freedom of expression and association, but substantively equal opportunity for individuals from marginalized groups to develop and exercise their capacities, and to have meaningful voice in the governance of the institutions whose roles and policies condition their lives. When the politics of cultural difference dominates political discourse on group difference, however, these positional issues are harder to raise and discuss. The weight of felt grievance about structural injustice then may load onto these cultural conflicts.

The example of political conflict between Latinos and Anglos in the United States that may focus on cultural difference, but still have roots in structural inequality is not unique. It seems to me that some group political conflicts in multicultural European societies focus on cultural difference in a context where structural inequality is a primary but understated issue. Many Muslim people dwelling in major European cities, for example, are victims of racial injustice. They are excluded from many opportunities for achieving status and income, they suffer stereotyping and objectification of their embodied presence, they lack recognized political voice, and they often live in segregated less desirable neighborhoods. The claims of such Muslims that they should have the freedom to wear headscarves or make their prayer calls in the public squares in the European cities where they live should not be divorced from this context of broad and entrenched structural privilege of majorities and social and economic disadvantage of minorities. Public debates seem to displace the structural problems onto issues of culture; the debates tend to ignore issues of poverty, unemployment, poor education and segregation among

Muslims, at the same time that they magnify issues related to religion and culture.

### *B. State and Civil Society*

The paradigm situation assumed by the politics of cultural difference is that of a society in which there is a plurality of ethnic, national, and/or religious groups, but in the current moment one or some of them tends to wield dominant power through the state. These dominant groups tend to bias state action and policy in ways that favor members of their groups – for example, by declaring their language the official political language, or making only those religious holidays celebrated by members of their group holidays recognized by the state. Cultural minorities resist this dominative power, and make claims on the state and the other members of their society to recognize their right to freedom of expression and practice, to exempt them from certain regulations on religious or cultural grounds, to recognize their language as one among several constituting the political community, to allow and support their children being educated in their language, to take special measures to assure representation of minority groups in political decision making, and many other claims for cultural recognition and freedom. Some minority groups claim to be distinct nations toward whom a right of self-determination should be recognized. An array of proposals and debates has arisen concerning what it can mean to accommodate such a right, not all of which involve creating a distinct sovereign state for the oppressed nationality, but most of which involve constitutional issues.

I cannot here catalogue all the claims made under a politics of cultural difference nor review the diverse positions people take in response to these claims. I have detailed this much in order to notice one thing: Most of the issues that arise both in theoretical writing and public discussion about the politics of cultural difference concern state policy, regulation, or the organization of state institutions.

In this respect the politics of cultural difference usually comes within a liberal framework. One of the features of a liberal framework, as distinct from other possible frameworks in political theory, such as critical theory, republicanism or communitarianism, is that it often presumes that political struggle is primarily about state policy. This liberal framework assumes a simple model of society as consisting of the public – which coincides with what is under the administrative regulation of the state – and the private, which is everything else. Under this liberal model, the main question is, what shall the state permit, support, or require, and what shall it discourage or forbid. Framing questions of the politics of difference largely in terms of what the state should or should not do in relation to individuals and groups, however, ignores civil society as an arena both of institutional decision making and political struggle, on the one hand, and processes of structural differentiation, on the other. It tends to ignore ways that non-governmental institutions often exercise exploitation, domination and exclusion, as well as ways that private organizations and institutions can design remedies for these wrongs. The relations in which individuals and groups stand to one another within civil society, even apart from their relations to state policy, are very important both as causes of injustice and resources for remedying this injustice.<sup>31</sup>

The assumption that politics concerns primarily what the state allows, requires or forbids, moreover, can generate serious misunderstanding about positions taken by proponents of a politics of difference, particularly with the politics of positional difference. Brian Barry is a case in point. He quotes disapprovingly my claim in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* that “no social practices or activities should be excluded as improper subjects for public discussion, expression and collective choice,” and then cites Robert Fullinwider’s interpretation of this statement to the effect that I advocate political intervention and modification into “private choices.”

The specter haunting Barry and Fullinwider is the limitation of individual liberty backed by state sanction. Apparently they envi-

sion no object of public discussion and collective choice other than state policies and laws. Certainly these are important objects of public discussion and choice in a democracy. A political theory concerned with the production and reproduction of structural inequalities even when laws guarantee formally equal rights, however, must shine its light on other corners we well. Movements of African Americans, people with disabilities, feminists, gay men and lesbians, indigenous people, as well as many ethnic movements, realize that societal discrimination, processes of segregation and marginalization enacted through social networks and private institutions must be confronted in their non-state institutional sites. While law can provide a framework for equality, and some remedy for egregious violations of rights and respect, the state and law cannot and should not reach into every capillary of every day life. A politics of positional difference thus recommends that churches, universities, production and marketing enterprises, clubs and associations all examine their policies, practices, and priorities to discover ways they contribute to unjust structures and recommends changing them when they do. Such a position is not tantamount to calling the culture Gestapo to police every joke or bathroom design. Numerous social changes brought about by these movements in the last thirty years have involved actions by many people that were voluntary, in the sense that the state neither required them nor sanctioned agents who did not perform them. Indeed, state policy as often follows behind action within civil society directed at undermining structural injustice as leads it.<sup>32</sup>

Seyla Benhabib distinguishes such a “dual track” approach to politics, which she associates with critical theory, and argues that liberal political theory typically ignores non-state dimensions of politics.

In deliberative democracy, as distinguished from political liberalism, the official public sphere of representative institutions, which includes the legislature, executive and public bureaucracies, the judiciary and political parties, is not the only site of political contestation and or opinion and

will formation. Deliberative democracy focuses on social movements, and on the civil, cultural, religious, artistic, and political associations of the unofficial public sphere, as well.<sup>33</sup>

Barry and others who consider issues of difference under a liberal paradigm, ignores this non-official public sphere of contestation and action, and thus “attempts to solve multicultural conflicts through a juridical calculus of liberal rights.”<sup>34</sup> A conception of justice able to criticize relations of domination and limitation of opportunity suffered by gender, racialized, ethnic or religious groups must consider relations within private activities and civil society and their interaction with state institutions.<sup>35</sup>

### *C. Normalizing Culture*

I said that the logic of most theorizing in the politics of cultural difference, as well as the logic of many political debates about multiculturalism, assumes the point of view of a power or authority which deliberates about what practices, forms of expression, forms of civic and political association, and so on, should be allowed, encouraged, or required, and which discouraged or forbidden. Both theoretical and political debates in the politics of cultural difference, that is, often take the traditionally liberal form of debates about what should and what should not be tolerated.

Framing issues of difference in terms of toleration, however, often introduces a normalizing logic in debates about multiculturalism. The political questions debated often have this form: shall we tolerate this expression or practice that we find of questionable value or morality, for the sake of mutual accommodation and civic peace? Should we allow methods of processing animals for food which require that the animals be awake at the time of slaughter? I do not introduce this example to debate it, but rather as an example that this form is typical in multicultural debates. I think this form assumes the following: The primary participants in the debate are members of the “we,” who argue among them-

selves for and against toleration. This “we” is the point of view of the dominant culture, which also assumes itself to have the power to influence the authorities who allow or forbid. While those holding the point of view debate among themselves whether toleration is the appropriate stance in this case, they all presume themselves to occupy a position as normal, which means not only in the statistical majority, but also holding values that lie within the range of acceptable and even good. Those whose practices the normalized “we” debates have little or no voice in the debates. They are the object of the debates, but in it, if at all, only weakly as political subjects. The debate positions them as deviant in relation to the norm; as with all questions of toleration, the question is only, are these practices so deviant as to be beyond a line of permissibility? Those who find themselves positioned in this normalizing discourse often believe that the terms of the debate themselves are disrespectful, even before a resolution has been achieved. They also often believe that their being positioned as deviant makes them liable to other forms of denigration, exclusion, or disadvantage.

A funny inversion often happens to gender issues in this politics of cultural difference utilizing the normalizing logic implicit in many debates about toleration. I argued above that the politics of cultural difference obscures many issues concerning gender and justice that are matters of structural inequality. The politics of positional difference theorizes gender as a set of structural social positions. These structures operate in complex ways to render many women vulnerable to gender based domination and deprivation in most societies of the world, including Western liberal democracies.

You might never know it, however, to listen to gendered debates among contemporary theorists of the politics of cultural difference. Many of the political debates currently taking place about multiculturalism focus on beliefs and practices of cultural minorities, especially Muslims, about women. These debates are especially salient in Europe, though George W. Bush used these issues to great rhetorical effect to legitimate the U.S. led invasion



of Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>36</sup> A great deal of the recent political theoretical literature taking the approach of a politics of cultural difference devotes considerable attention to the treatment of women by cultural minorities.

In many theoretical writings on multiculturalism, gender issues serve as the test to the limits of toleration. Can we tolerate rules of a national minority that refuse to recognize the women who marry outside as group members? Can we allow Muslim women to accede to the pressure or expectation that they wear the hijab? Surely we cannot permit arranged marriages of teenage girls or female genital cutting under any circumstances.

My purpose in calling attention to the ubiquity of gender issues in contemporary political and theoretical debates on cultural difference is not to examine the arguments on various sides and take a position. I bring them up as instances of the normalizing discourse of toleration typical of the logic of the politics of cultural difference. The “we” in these questions occupies the position of the majority Western liberals. “We” can raise these questions about the extent to which the gender practices of the minority culture can be tolerated because among “us,” women have the same freedom and autonomy as men. Our gender individualism is the norm against which the practices of many cultures come up deviant. Debates about gender in the politics of cultural difference thus serve the double function of positioning some cultural groups beyond the pale and encouraging a self-congratulatory arrogance on the part of the “we” who debate these issues. Gender has moved from being a difference to occupying the universal. In the process, the real issues of gendered structural inequality may be ignored.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The purpose of this essay has been to clarify differences in approaches to political and theoretical debates about justice: whether and to what extent justice calls for attending to rather than

ignoring social group differences. The fact that the politics of cultural difference has more occupied political theorists in recent years than a politics of positional difference is lamentable, I have suggested, for several reasons. It tends to narrow the groups of concern to ethnic, national, and religious groups, and to limit the issues of justice at stake to those concerned with freedom and autonomy more than equal opportunity of people to develop capacities and live a life of well-being. Its reliance on a liberal paradigm, moreover, tends to limit politics to shaping state policy and to reintroduce normalizing discourses into what began as denormalizing movements. My objective in making these distinctions and arguments has not been to reject the politics of cultural difference, but to encourage political theorists to re-focus their attention to group differences generated from structural power, the division of labor, and constructions of the normal and the deviant, as they continue also to reflect on conflicts over national, ethnic, or religious difference.

## Notes

- 1 This essay was first delivered as W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture at the Humboldt University in Berlin, on June 24 2004. It is forthcoming in: Anthony Laden and David Owen, eds., *Debates on Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2006).
- 2 Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1990).
- 3 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1995); some of the ideas appeared in less developed form in Kymlicka's *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1989).
- 4 Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000).
- 5 Versions of this paper have been presented at the International Association of Feminist Philosophers, Gothenberg, Sweden, June 2004; a meeting of the Chicago area Conference for the Study of Political Thought at the University of Illinois at Chicago, November 2004; lecture at Duquesne University November 2005; Mellon Seminar at Columbia University, November 2005. I have profited from discussions on those occasions. I am grateful to the following individuals for comments on earlier drafts: David Alexander, Joseph Carens, Jon Elster, Fred Evans, David Ingram, Anthony Laden, Patchen Markell, John McCormick, David Owen, and Jeremy Waldron.
- 6 Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 2001).
- 7 Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).
- 8 I have elaborated a notion of structural group difference and structural inequality in several previous writings. See *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000), 92–102; “Equality of Whom? Social Groups and Judgments of Injustice,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 9:1 (March 2001), 1–18; “Taking the Basic Structure Seriously,” *Perspectives on Politics* 4:1 (March 2006), 91–7.
- 9 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia U P, 1993), 20.
- 10 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1971), 83.
- 11 Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Anita Silvers, “Formal Justice,” in: *Disability, Difference, Discrimination*, ed. Anita Silvers, David Wasserman, and Many Mahowald (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 13–146; Martha Nussbaum, *Boundaries of Justice* (Harvard:

- Harvard U P, 2006), chapters 2 and 3.
- 12 I have argued that so-called merit standards often normalize attributes, comportments, or attainments associated with particular social groups, and thus often do not serve the impartial purpose they claim. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1990), chapter 7. Brian Barry aims to refute this critique in: *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity P, 2001), 90–102. For a good reply to Barry on these points, from the point of view of a politics of positional difference, see Paul Kelly, “Defending some Dodos: Equality and/or Liberty?” in: *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*, ed. Paul Kelly (Cambridge: Polity P, 2002), 62–80. See also Clare Chambers, “All Must Have Prizes: The Liberal Case for Interference in Cultural Practices,” in the same volume, 151–73.
  - 13 Barry, 95.
  - 14 I have discussed this issue in another essays, “Disability and the Definition of Work,” in: *Americans with Disabilities: Exploring Implications of the Law for Individuals and Institutions*, ed. Leslie Pickering Francis and Anita Silvers (New York: Routledge, 2000), 169–73.
  - 15 I take the term “epidermalize” from Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove P, 1967), 110–2; see also Thomas F. Slaughter, Jr., “Epidermalizing the World: A Basic Mode of Being Black,” in: *Philosophy Born of Struggle*, ed. Leonard Harris (Dubuque, IA: Hunt Publishers, 1983), 283–8.
  - 16 Lewis Gordon analyzes the logic of the dichotomy of anti-Black racism according to an existentialist logic of absolute subject and the Other; see *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P, 1995). I have brought a Foucaultian framework to articulate how racial dichotomy sets up norms that then organize bodies on a scale of better and worse; see *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, chapter 5, “The Scaling of Bodies and the Politics of Identity,” (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1990).
  - 17 See Glen Loury, *Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2002), chapter 3.
  - 18 For a more thorough account of the distinction between segregation and clustering, and an account of the structural consequences of segregation, see Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000), chapter 6.
  - 19 I have made a longer argument to this effect in chapter 3 of *Inclusion and Democracy*. See also Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2003). Gutmann’s analysis would be even stronger if she theorized the social group as a product of structural processes of

privilege rather than as a prejudicial ascription of denigrated status onto some people. Gutmann well articulates a distinction between an “identity politics” which might take pride in ascriptive identity as such, on the one hand, and a group based politics in which “the appropriate object of pride is not the ascriptive identity in itself but rather the identity’s manifestation of dignified, self-respecting personhood, the personhood of someone who has overcome social obstacles because of an ascriptive identity,” on the other; 136.

- 20 Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).
- 21 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1995), 19.
- 22 Kymlicka, 18.
- 23 Jeff Spinner-Halev, *Surviving Diversity: Religion and Democratic Citizenship* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins U P, 2000).
- 24 Texts that add a focus on religious difference, and separate it from but compare it to issues of national and ethnic difference include Gutmann, cited above; Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (London: MacMillan, 2000); Ayalet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2001); Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2002).
- 25 Joseph Carens, “Liberalism and Culture,” in: *Culture, Citizenship and Community: A Contextual Explication of Justice as Evenhandedness*, ed. Joseph Carens (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000), 52–87.
- 26 Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*; Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*.
- 27 Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso P, 2003).
- 28 See Iris Marion Young, “Unruly Categories: A Critique of Fraser’s Dual Systems Theory,” *New Left Review* 222 (March/April 1997), 147–60.
- 29 See *Inclusion and Democracy*, 102–107.
- 30 See Iris Marion Young, “Structure, Difference, and Hispanic/Latino Claims of Justice,” in: *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States: Ethnicity, Race and Rights*, ed. Jorge J.E. Gracia and Pablo de Greiff (New York: Routledge, 2000), 147–66.
- 31 In chapter 5 of *Inclusion and Democracy* I further discuss the virtues and limits of action in civil society for remedying injustice.
- 32 Brian Barry also blanches at the assertion I make in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* that remedy for normalizing social processes is “cultural revolution.” In this phrase, which I borrowed from Julia Kristeva,

“culture” refers to modes of comportment, gestures, speech styles and other modes of communication and how people understand these in the everyday lifeworld. See Julia Kristeva, “Le Sujet en Proces,” in: *Polylogue* (Paris: Editions Seuil, 1977). “Revolution” may be a dramatic term. Eliminating ways that women, people with disabilities or poor people are sometimes denigrated, however, among other things requires changing some symbolic meanings and interactive habits of some people. In her reaction to the phrase, “cultural revolution,” Amy Gutmann also manifests an assumption that state and law are the primary motors of social change to undermine injustice. Processes that now I would call “denormalization,” must involve change of interactive habits as well as institutional rule reform.

33 Benhabib, 21.

34 *Ibid.*

35 See also Benhabib, 118–21.

36 See Iris Marion Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29:1 (Fall 2003).